

Message Text

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 01 COLOMB 04491 091132Z

12

ACTION NEA-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 IO-13 SIL-01 /025 W

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R 090634Z DEC 76

FM AMEMBASSY COLOMBO

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 6292

C O N F I D E N T I A L COLOMBO 4491

STADIS////////////////////////////////////

E.O. 11652:GDS

TAGS:ELAB, ILO, CE

SUBJECT: DEALWIS REMARKS AT ILO GB

REF: (A) STATE 293744; (B) GENEVA 8380; (C) GENEVA 9573

1. WITHOUT KNOWING THE EXACT CIRCUMSTANCES IN WHICH DEALWIS MADE HIS REMARKS (REFTEL C), IT IS DIFFICULT TO GUESS WHAT CAUSED THE OUTBURST. WE GATHER, HOWEVER, THAT DE ALWIS MAY HAVE BEEN SPEAKING AT LEAST PARTLY EXTEMPORANEOUSLY AND NOT FROM A PREPARED TEXT. IF SO, HE MAY HAVE BEEN TRYING TO BURNISH HIS IMAGE AS THE SPOKESMAN OF THE NON-ALIGNED AND THE GROUP OF 77 AND WAS CARRIED AWAY BY HIS OWN RHETORIC.

2. THE "NUCLEAR THREAT" GAFFE STRIKES US AN ATTEMPT TO RETALIATE AGAINST THE ATTEMPT BY THE U.S. REPRESENTATIVE TO SHUT HIM OFF. DE ALWIS IS NORMALLY A CAREFUL AND SOFT SPOKEN PERSON. HOWEVER, WHEN HE WAS IN WASHINGTON, IT WAS EVIDENT THAT HE BELIEVED ATTACK THE BEST FORM OF DEFENSE AGAINST CRITICISM ; I.E. IF SOMEONE QUESTIONED SRI LANKA'S DOMESTIC ECONOMIC POLICIES HE WOULD COUNTER WITH ATTACKS ON WESTERN NIGGARDLINESS. HE PROBABLY CONSIDERED HIS REMARKS MERELY DEBATING TACTICS.

3. WHATEVER THE CIRCUMSTANCES, WE BELIEVE THE TONE OF DE ALWIS'S REMARKS IS NOT IN KEEPING WITH WHAT WE HAVE BEEN TOLD IS THE GSL'S APPROACH TO THESE ISSUES, DIALOGUE RATHER THAN CONFRONTATION. WE ARE PREPARED TO TAKE UP DE ALWIS'S REMARKS AT AN APPROPRIATE LEVEL HERE, SHOULD

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THE DEPARTMENT SO DESIRE. HOWEVER, IT IS LIKELY THAT

THE MDFA WILL HAVE NO IDEA OF THE CIRCUMSTANCES OF THE
DE ALWIS REMARKS AND THAT INITIAL LOCAL REACTION IS
LIKELY TO BE ONE OF PERHAPS A TEMPEST IN A TEAPOT AND
OF OVER-REACTION ON OUR PART. FURTHERMORE, INASMUCH
AS DE ALWIS HAS IN THE PAST PLAYED A ROLE AS CHAIRMAN
OF THE G-77 AND THE GROUP'S SPOKESMAN IN OTHER FORA
THAN ILO, DEPARTMENT MAY WISH TO CONSIDER WHETHER
MAKING AN ISSUE OF THIS INCIDENT MAY PROVE COUNTER-
PRODUCTIVE IN VIEW OF OUR INTERESTS IN OTHER AREAS
OF INTERNATIONAL NEGOTIATIONS. IN THIS CONNECTION,
DEPARTMENT MAY WISH TO DISCUSS MATTER WITH AMBASSADOR
FRANCIS DALE WHO, WE BELIEVE, ENJOYED CORDIAL
RELATIONS WITH DE ALWIS.
REED

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